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# FEAST

## — SPRING 2008 —



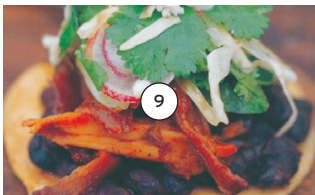
A tisket, a tasket



7 spring flings



9 Manhattans in the Mission



1,001 cookbooks



7 fantastic fish and chips



Sunshine on my shoulder



7 places to BYOB



7 spicy suppers



8 spots for outdoor dining



6 African feasts

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# A Tisket, a tasket

*It's springtime in your basket*

It's Spring Break! No, not for students. They had theirs last month. *This* one's for all of us: that blissful time between winter's chill and early summer's gloom when the sun shines its light (and sometimes even warmth) on our fair city. Which means bike rides without GoreTex, dresses without tights, torsos without shirts, and, best of all, picnics in the park.

In honor of this glorious season of backyard barbecues and patio parties, we've dedicated this FEAST to all kinds of sunny delights. We've got places to take a May Day date, bars where you can sip a tequila sunset while actually watching one, and a guide to the perfect places for carry-along cuisines.

But don't forget we're still the city of near-perpetual

autumn. So we've added a couple places where you can turn up the culinary heat on those chilly nights when the fog's rolling in — not to mention quite a few places to wet your whistle in the style of that bastion of cold weather cuisine: Manhattan.

Time to get yourself some new shades, pull your sandals out of storage, and get your ass outside, before academic calendars and weather patterns have us all going "back to school" shopping and supping.

Bon appetit, and don't forget the sunscreen,

**Molly Freedenberg**  
Feast Spring 2008 editor  
› molly@sfbg.com

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# 7 spring flings

San Francisco is such a gosh darn charming place, it often seems as if there are more romantic dining options than available dates. To which we say: Never! Spring has sprung and frisky hormones are back in motion after cozy hibernation. Grab the nearest eligible and hit up the following delightfully intimate (and reasonably priced) eateries, if only to test-drive the menu.

(Marke B.)

## BAR BAMBINO

Mouth-watering charcuterie for your cutie, an extensive wine list to revel in, and an atmosphere that, while occasionally heavy on the decibel level, will douse any diminished conversation expectations in attractive lighting — so at least the potential partner across the table will *look* irresistible. Factor in a nifty little patio in back and an olive oil tasting menu to lubricate the cooing (plus a plethora of lip-smacking Italian dishes) and the mood is set for, if not love, then perhaps a memorable evening in the Mission.

2931 16th St., SF. (415) 701-8466, [www.barbambino.com](http://www.barbambino.com)

## CAFÉ ANDRÉE

You, of course, have absolutely no problem “closing the deal” — but it’s always good to have a secret weapon on hand, just in case. Café Andrée is mine. Every time I usher a hottie into Andrée’s intimate, well-appointed librarylike setting in the Rex Hotel downtown (bookshelves line the walls and there are globes galore), I know the rest of the evening will be silky smooth. Executive chef Evan Crandall creates incredible pan-global dishes that never fail to tickle. And his new spring menu is on fire. The best part: if your date bores you to tears, you don’t have to bring a book. Café Andrée does it all!

562 Sutter, SF. (415) 217-4001,

[www.jdvhotels.com/dining/sanfrancisco\\_cafeandree](http://www.jdvhotels.com/dining/sanfrancisco_cafeandree)

## COULEUR CAFÉ

Perfect for a leisurely luncheon prelude to any early-evening nuzzling, this Portrero Hill café’s generous outdoor patio and savory dishes may be responsible for more than a few calls into work begging for the afternoon off. The theme is laidback French with some Mediterranean kick, which is actually the description of many a dream date as well. A come-hither combo that always works for me: assiette de merguez with harissa for starters, followed up by the mussels marinieres and pommes frites. Enjoy.

300 De Haro, SF. (415) 255-1021, [www.couleurcafesf.com](http://www.couleurcafesf.com)

## 1550 HYDE CAFÉ AND WINE BAR

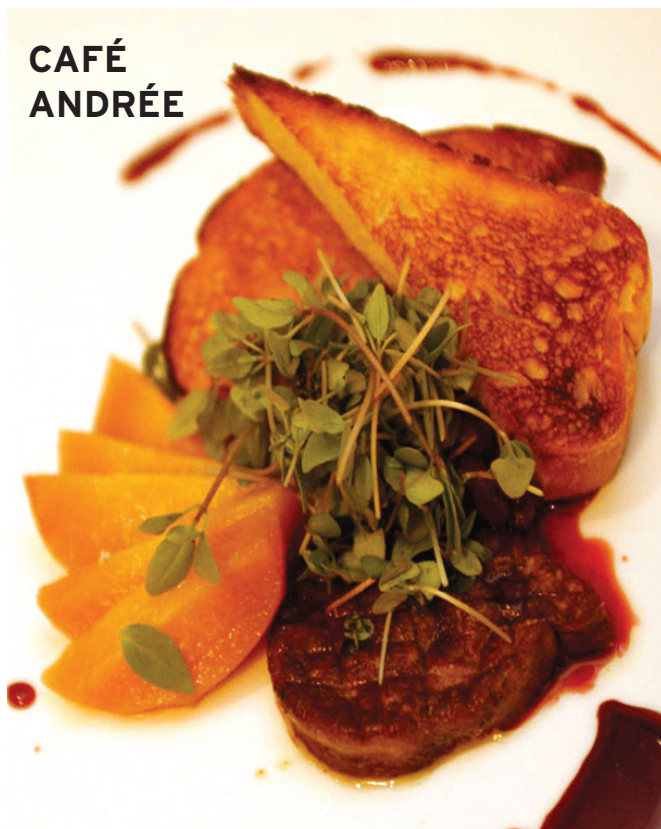
Nob Hill: the dating double-entendres are endless. So is the romance, especially if you duck into the intensely cozy 1550 Hyde for an adventurous wine flight and delectable cheese plate or main dish. (If 1550 is featuring its wondrous Provençal fish stew while you’re there, try it and thank me later). The emphasis here is on locally produced goods — the better to draw you closer — and the restaurant discourages cell phones, so your tête-à-tête is guaranteed to be restricted to sweet nothings.

1550 Hyde, SF. (415) 775-1550, [www.1550hyde.com](http://www.1550hyde.com)

## L'ARDOISE

I can’t lie to you. I’m eating a can of Campbell’s tomato soup while I write this, but I’m dreaming of the escargots in garlic parsley sauce and almond-crusted barramundi at this brand-spanking new French delight near Duboce Park. Needless to say, I’ve already spent many a cherished hour there with my lover-of-the-moment. The space is

## CAFÉ ANDRÉE



GUARDIAN PHOTO BY RORY MCNAMARA

warm and inviting, and the friendliness of the service puts any haughty stereotypes of the French to rest. “L’Ardoise” means chalkboard, so be sure to check the specials, which usually include a number of creamy cheeses as well as unique entrées that’ll have you’re your date shouting “oui, monsieur.”

151 Noe, SF. (415) 437-2600, [www.lardoisesf.com](http://www.lardoisesf.com)

## TANGERINE

“Tangerine — she is all they claim / With her eyes of night and lips as bright as flame.” So begins the famous jazz song, “Tangerine” — and the Castro restaurant of the same name seduces with an equal amount of yummy crepuscular abandon. Asian influences dot chef Sean Pattansuvoranun’s menu — and a recent pairing of the lemongrass lamb lollipops appetizer with a drunken duck entrée had me begging for Pattansuvoranun’s home phone number. But he knows better.

Tangerine’s decor is crisp-yet-amiable, and the service is fluid, allowing you enough privacy to lick each other’s plates. 3499 16th St., SF. (415) 626-1700, [www.tangerinesf.com](http://www.tangerinesf.com)

## BITTERSWEET CHOCOLATE CAFÉ

If “bittersweet” describes the tenor of your evening together so far, tune up the ol’ heartstrings with a chocolate-flavored valentine at this cute café, with locations in Upper Fillmore and Oakland. A cocoa cornucopia of tastings, pastries, and specialty drinks — hello, hot steaming cup of chocolate chai — Bittersweet stays open pretty late, and will end any evening on a sumptuous note (even if your sheets remain uncrumpled).

2123 Fillmore, SF. (415) 346-8715; 5427 College Ave, Oakl. (510) 654-7159, [www.bittersweetcafe.com](http://www.bittersweetcafe.com) **SFBG**



# 9 Manhattans in the Mission

I'd burned out on vodka sodas. Straight tequila was making me nuts. And I couldn't seem to find a decent margarita. I needed to find a drink with a punch, but one that didn't lead to the dark under-eye circles the next morning. I didn't think I'd love a cocktail again. That is, not until my friend handed me my first Manhattan.

Oh, the Manhattan. So simple and bold, with its combination of whiskey, vermouth, bitters, and a cherry. And so very American, with its East Coast name and Southern origins (the first versions in the 1870s were made with Kentucky bourbon, and most still are). I now have a patriotic devotion to this concoction, as well as an impressive ability to balance a martini glass in a crowded bar. **(Paula Connelly)**

## THE LIBERTIES

This Irish pub's version of the Manhattan is strong and pure, tasting almost like straight Maker's Mark. The only reason I knew there was vermouth included is because I caught a flash of green glass as the bartender mixed it. It was even served, unapologetically, without the drink's trademark cherry (which, honestly, is fine by me). I guessed this particular formula was cultural — the Irish don't monkey with their whiskey — but I was proved wrong when we tested our anthropological theory at the Phoenix, whose version is cloyingly sweet. If you really like your whiskey, stick with Liberties.

998 Guerrero, SF. (415) 282-6789, [www.theliberties.com](http://www.theliberties.com)

CONTINUES ON PAGE 8 >>

CONDUIT



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## MANHATTANS CONT.>>

### LASZLO

When you can't get a sunny day seat at Revolution Cafe (hey, they only serve beer and wine anyway), head to Laszlo around the corner. Not only does it always have outdoor tables available, but it served one of the best cocktails on my tour: a smooth Maker's Manhattan. It was stirred, not shaken — which the bartender said keeps the drink from getting watered down — and came with a brandied cherry. An extra bonus for daytime visits? You get to skip the North of Market nighttime crowd.

2526 Mission, SF. (415) 401-0810, [www.laszlobar.com](http://www.laszlobar.com)

### BLOWFISH SUSHI

Need to show your out-of-town friends the Mission? Get them the neighborhood's namesake drink at Blowfish, made with Ka No Ko Japanese whiskey. Served with a brandied cherry to balance the cocktail's smoky taste, this Manhattan is certainly a crowd

pleaser. Once you've liquored up your visitors in style, *then* you can take them to your favorite Mission Street dive.

2170 Bryant, SF. (415) 285-3848, [www.blowfishsushi.com](http://www.blowfishsushi.com)

### CONDUIT

The new swankfest on Valencia and 14th streets might break your bank and leave you hungry after dinner, but it's a great place to treat yourself to sexy cocktails without fear of running into any of your financially-challenged friends. Conduit's souped-up Manhattan, called the Heart of Islay, is made with Black Bottle 10-year-old Scotch, vermouth, Cointreau, and a splash of blood orange juice. The sweet ingredients help the cocktail go down smooth without overpowering the smoked wooden barrel flavor of the Scotch. Conduit's classic Manhattan is great too, as it's made with Old Overholt rye. Have one of each and you might even get the guts to taste the lamb tongue or pay a visit to the coed translucent glass restroom. 280 Valencia, SF. (415) 552-5200

### RANGE

The Third Rail is Range's hybrid version of the classic pre-1940s Manhattan, made with Bulleit bourbon, Lillet Blanc (sweet wine), orange bitters, and lemon. This fusion blend is perfect for beginners, but it ain't no classic. But a version made with Woodhouse Reserve, sweet vermouth, Angostura bitters, and a brandied cherry is as good as it gets. If you can find a seat at the bar, order two — but stop there. A wise friend once said, "Manhattans are like breasts: two are perfect, but three are too many — and just plain weird."

842 Valencia, SF. [www.rangesf.com](http://www.rangesf.com)

### NIHON WHISKY LOUNGE

On the list of Nihon's special happy hour cocktail, salad, and appetizer menu, where everything's half price, is the Devil's Manhattan. This cocktail is made with 100-proof Rittenhouse Kentucky Rye, SoCo, sweet vermouth, and bitters — and for a mere six bucks, is definitely worth it. Sure, Nihon's out of the way, but you probably need

something from Rainbow anyway. 1779 Folsom, SF. (415) 552-4400, [www.nihon-sf.com](http://www.nihon-sf.com)

### LATIN AMERICAN CLUB

If you want to test your Jedi glass-balancing skills, order a Manhattan here on a weekend. The Manhattan here was by far the best dive bar version I tried — made with Jim Beam, sweet vermouth, bitters, and a maraschino cherry, it was neither too sweet nor too strong. 3286 22nd St., SF. (415) 647-2732

### CASANOVA LOUNGE AND ELBO ROOM

These staple Mission bars serve reasonably priced, decent Maker's Manhattans. You might not even notice how sweet they are by your second one.

Casanova Lounge, 527 Valencia, SF. (415) 863-9328, [www.casanovasf.com](http://www.casanovasf.com)  
Elbo Room, 647 Valencia, SF. (415) 552-7788, [www.elbo.com](http://www.elbo.com).  
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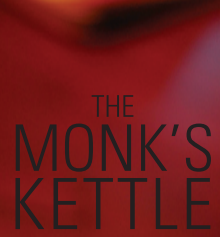



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# 1,001 cookbooks you must spatter before you die

... beginning with this indispensable handful by local chefs

By Paul Reidinger

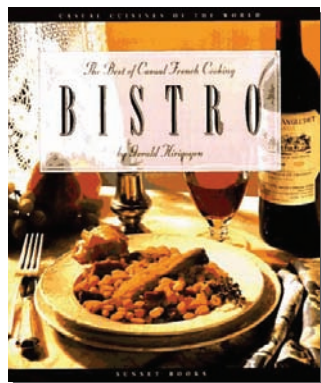
> paul@sfbg.com

Not that there's anything wrong with pornography, but does *everything* have to be pornography now? Was a law passed in the dead of night, like a Congressional pay raise? In pondering undue pornography, I don't mean to indict certain of our favorite Web sites (exemption granted!) or gay newspaper ads for auto repair in which a cute shirtless mechanic smiles insinuatingly while holding a big wrench — silly but harmless, and one turns the page to the cosmetic dentistry ad with the shirtless boy holding a big toothbrush. I *do* mean, at the moment, cookbooks, which over the past 10 or 15 years have gone from being rather austere and text-heavy tomes full of learning and encouragement to lurid encyclopedias of full-color photographs whose subjects are sprawled and splayed in poses worthy of *Hustler* or *Drummer*.

Are these *objets d'titillation* meant to be used or ogled? On my shelves sit a battered battery of old-timers, including *The Fanny Farmer Cookbook* (1979), *The New York Times Cookbook* (1961), and *The New Joy of Cooking* (1997) — the last a revised classic published barely more than a decade ago. All are rich in fine recipes, and I know this because many of their pages are stained and spattered: evidence that I use them often. The pages open automatically to recipes I've consulted before and will

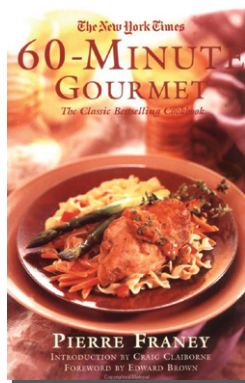
doubtless consult again.

None of these worthy volumes have much by way of illustration beyond the occasional charcoal sketch. This has never been an issue. It's possible that a voluptuous photograph of a lemon tart will fill you with a desire to make said tart by using the recipe on the preceding page, but it's also possible that the photo will fill you with frustration and embarrassment when your own tart turns out to be not quite so photogenic as the one in the book. You might even decline to make the tart again. It's important to believe that when you make a recipe and the result is acceptable, you've done it the way the recipe writer meant you to.

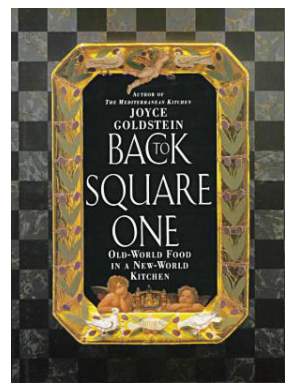


There is a lovely photograph of a lemon tart in Gerald Hirigoyen's *Bistro* (Sunset Books, 1995), one of the dozen or so cookbooks by local chefs I use all the time despite the overwhelmingly sensual photography that fills them. My

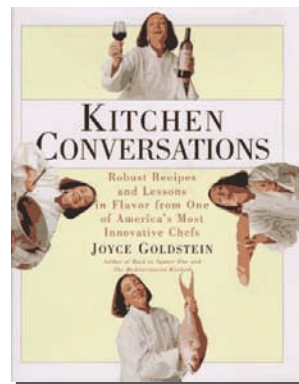
lemon tarts never look quite as fancy as the one in Hirigoyen's book, mainly because I skip the step that involves candying very thin slices of lemon and baking them into the center of the tart as decoration. But my lemon-tart-for-dummies version tastes good and is easier and less messy to make — and guests never decline leftover pieces to take home for breakfast. Hirigoyen, incidentally, who grew up in French Basque country, is the founder of Fringale (which he's no longer involved with) and Pipérade, which began its life in the mid-1990s as Pastis.



Of the many esteemed local chefs who publish cookbooks, I esteem none higher than Joyce Goldstein, whose recipes use straightforward techniques, don't rely too heavily on odd ingredients, and always work. For the home cook, her only peer is the late Pierre Franey, who wrote the "60-Minute Gourmet" column for the *New York Times* for years and turned those many columns into a pair of sublime cookbooks, *The Sixty Minute Gourmet* and *Cuisine Rapide* (both Times Books; 2000, 1989). My copies of Franey have the *hors de combat* look of soldiers' boots after a long tour at the front. And while they probably wouldn't command much in the used-book market, their condition does tell the discerning eye that they're probably well worth having.



Due to an administrative error, I never acquired a copy of Goldstein's first and probably best-known cookbook, *The Mediterranean Kitchen* (1989), which she published while running her famous and wonderful Barbary Coast restaurant, Square One. I rely, instead, on her *Back to Square One* (Morrow, 1992) and have made her versions of Mexican cauliflower soup and spicy Indian lentils from that book so often that I no longer need to consult the recipes. The soup recipe, in particular, is quintessential Goldstein: a brief list of easy-to-get ingredients, a few steps briskly described, and a beguiling result that's more than the sum of its parts.



If you just can't face cauliflower and you have stale bread in the house — onions too — try Goldstein's recipe for Italian onion soup with bread and sage, from *Kitchen Conversations* (Morrow, 1996).

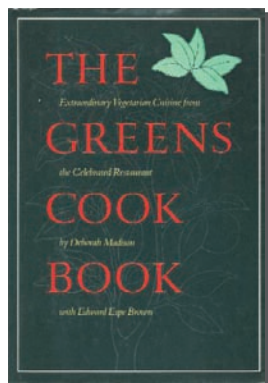
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## Cookbooks CONT>>

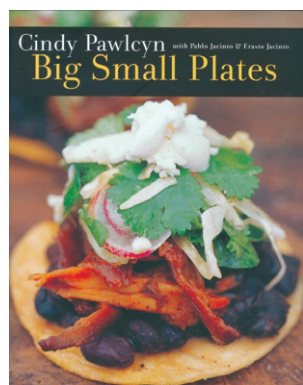
This simple soup resembles its more famous French cousin — onions caramelized in butter, sage, melted cheese on top — and is yet another example of Italian cleverness about not wasting food, in this case stale bread. (Hint: the soup is mighty fine when made strictly according to the recipe, but it's a little richer if you use beef stock instead of plain water.)

My copy of the original Greens cookbook, *The Greens Cookbook* (Bantam, 1987), is more than 20 years old now and has spatters even on the frontispiece. Inexplicable. The book's author is Deborah Madison, who will be recalled by those with elephant memories as the restaurant's first chef when it opened in 1979. The book was my first vegetarian cookbook, and it still has a favorite-blanket aura in that respect. But the recipe I still



use over and over is the one for bread — focaccia, to be precise. The would-be baker of bread in this cold city is beset by terrors and frustrations, mainly having to do with the lack of the fabled “warm, draft-free place” bread dough must be placed in if it's to rise properly. But Greens' focaccia is hardiness itself: it rises even in gray winter, it's soft, it takes dimpling beautifully, it bakes quickly, pops right out of the pan when done, and everybody

loves it no matter what you put on top.



Cindy Pawlcyn has launched some of the Bay Area's most beloved and durable restaurants (including Fog City Diner and Mustards Grill), but lately she's been revealing herself to be an excellent recipe writer for the home cook. My copy of her *Big Small Plates* (Ten Speed, 2006) has a big spatter on the *gougères* page and another on the *papas bravas* page.

*Gougères* are tasty little cheese puffs and are, with some champagne, a wonderful treat to serve guests before dinner, at least if you serve them warm, but their glory is of the brief, summer-in-Antarctica variety, and they cool all too quickly to forgettability. The *papas bravas* (paprika-scented Spanish-style potatoes), though less finger-friendly, are a little more forgiving; they cool along a gentler arc and are still perfectly fine even when approaching room temperature.

For meat cookery, I rely on Bruce Aidell's *The Complete Meat Cookbook* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998). It manages to be both authoritative and friendly, it's full of wonderful recipes that aren't complicated (including bulletproof versions of the venerable Tuscan pork roast called *arista* and charcoal-grilled Florentine beef). Even in years gone by, when I cooked a lot more meat than I



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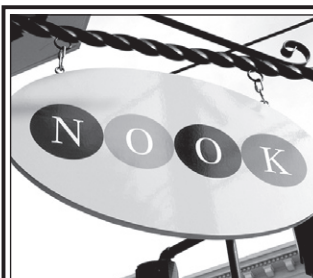
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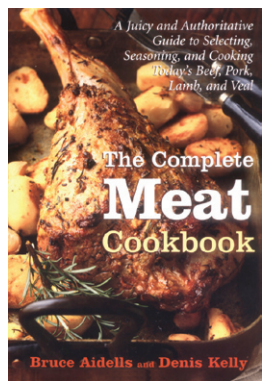
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do now, I never felt the need to seek out guidance elsewhere. It's as canonical as a cookbook can be.

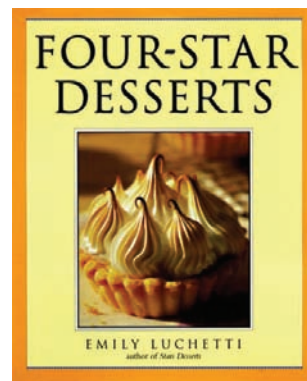
Cookbook canons tend to be narrow, in part because of personal taste and because shelf space is limited, but occasionally a new entrant does join the elect. One such recent addition, for me, is *The Spanish Table Cookbook* (The Spanish Table, 2005) by Steve Winston, who not coincidentally is one of the owners of



The Spanish Table in Berkeley, a rich resource not only for seekers after *pimentón* and *piquillo* peppers but paella pans and cazuelas. The book itself, with its simple black-and-white sketches, is a refreshing throwback to pre-porn days. It is also full of wisdom and tips about Iberian cooking, which, having never found a popular Anglophone exponent as French cuisine did in Julia Child, remains faintly exotic in this country. Naturally the book

gives several good paella recipes, including one with prawns, chickpeas, and ñora peppers, as well as several interpretations of the pasta brought to Iberia by the Arabs and known to the Spanish as *fideo*. The paella-like dish made with this pasta (if you can find it, and you can find it at The Spanish Table) is called *fideuà*.

No discussion of cookbooks would be complete without mention of at least one volume consecrated to dessert. For me that volume is Emily Luchetti's *Four Star Desserts* (HarperCollins, 1996), the title referring to her long run as pastry chef at Stars. (She's had a comparable run at Farallon.) My copy: gravely spattered. Many are the times I've made the bitter-orange crèmes caramels (though often not with bitter orange but some other interesting citrus), not to mention the banana tarte tatin and Key lime pie. Although the book



features a fair amount of vivid photography, the recipes I like the most and use most often do not include photographs. For a more sweeping compendium of Luchetti recipes, there's *Classic Stars Desserts* (Chronicle Books, 2007), a kind of greatest-hits album that includes the secrets of Stareos, the famous Stars cookies. A discreet aside here to you inveterate porndogs: Stareos and other cookies can be eaten with one hand. **SFBG**

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## 7 fantastic fish and chips

To the captain in charge of the next Bay Area oil spill, a few requests:

- (1) It would be great if the oil could be piping hot: 350 to 450 degrees would be about right.
  - (2) Please make sure it is refined vegetable, safflower, or peanut oil.
  - (3) Aim for the spill to happen near a high cod concentration.
  - (4) Don't forget to toss in julienned potatoes following the oil.
  - (5) Create a Facebook Event so we all know when to come out for a fish and chips feast.
- Ahh. That'll be a great day. But until then we'll have to make do with the many restaurants that dish up a good platter of fish and

chips. Fortunately, this combo often escapes the mediocre fate of so much pub food in this town, and you can find a number of great servings across the city. **(Jon Beckhardt)**

### THE RAMP

For whatever reason, many find the experience of eating fish and chips to be heightened by eating them near the water. But do you want to navigate tourists and souvenir shops on Fisherman's Wharf? Or perhaps worse, navigate baby carriages and joggers in the Marina? Those of us who answer no must seek our seaside suppers on the bay side, where we find the Ramp. The menu may be a little cutesy, but don't let that discourage you from getting a serious serving of crispy fish

and chips. Some might find the curly fries a bit inauthentic, but once you see a plate of them go by, you'll be glad for the substitution.

855 Terry Francois, SF. (415) 621-2378, [www.ramprestaurant.com](http://www.ramprestaurant.com)

### PHOENIX IRISH BAR

If you wish to make the argument that the Irish are this city's most important ethnic minority, you'd be best served doing so over an order of fish and chips at the Phoenix. The fried cod clouds served here approach the ideal that many a traveler to the United Kingdom carries home with them. Extra points for great coleslaw. A heaping of extra, extra points for superior tartar sauce.

811 Valencia, SF. (415) 695-1811, [www.phoenixirishbar.com](http://www.phoenixirishbar.com)

### THE LIBERTIES

Not too many fish-and-chip peddlers shoot for a thick cut of seafood. Besides the fact that it cuts down on the delicious fried-crust-to-fish-flesh ratio, you run the risk of cooking it unevenly and drying out the fish. The bold cooks at Liberties take this risk and come away with a fish so flaky it erases all concerns. On top of that, the moist fish is matched with a thick, airy batter.

998 Guerrero, SF. (415) 282-6789, [www.theliberties.com](http://www.theliberties.com)

### EDINBURGH CASTLE

It's easy, when going to the Edinburgh Castle, to overlook the fish and chips, not least because they actually come from down the street. But besides being able to enjoy the meal in a setting that is as much medieval beer-den as art-school hangout, these fish come wrapped in yesterday's *San Francisco Chronicle*. This single dish tastes delicious, puts one of the city's media outlets to good use, and satisfies fantasies of Olde English pub crawling — all at the same time!

950 Geary, SF. (415) 885-4074, [www.castlenews.com](http://www.castlenews.com)

### WOODHOUSE FISH COMPANY

Despite America's historical connection to the motherland, a quick census of passersby on the street reveals that surprisingly few of us come from Great Britain. But many San Franciscans hail from the shores of New England, and they can find fish and chips with a more Northeastern feel just a hop away from the Muni at Woodhouse Fish Co. It is hard to pass up the stuffed lobster roll, but the fish and chips present a worthy alternative. At other places, the fries often get shafted, presumed to be less important just because their name goes second. Woodhouse gives these chips their due; they're perhaps the best on this list: thin and crispy.

2073 Market, SF. (415) 437-CRAB, [www.woodhousefish.com](http://www.woodhousefish.com)

### THE CHIEFTAIN IRISH PUB AND RESTAURANT

A lighter batter and a thicker chip characterize the fish and chips at the Chieftain. Thankfully, all the batter goes toward the shared goal of crispness. While you can opt for a fourth piece of cod for an additional \$3.50, listen to the you-of-20-minutes-later and stick with three. It's enough. 198 Fifth St., SF. (415) 615-0916, [www.thechieftain.com](http://www.thechieftain.com)

### THE IRISH BANK

When you wander to the realm of Union Square, it's hard to discern the real restaurants from the good real estate investments. But you'll be rewarded if you find yourself in the Irish Bank ordering the fish and chips. An all-around winner, the fish is not too greasy. And the chips match the fish perfectly: they're crisp on the outside, but warm, soft, and moist on the inside.

10 Mark, SF. (415) 788-7152, [www.theirishbank.com](http://www.theirishbank.com) **SFBG**

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Models (from left to right): Lawrence Cuevas, Camille Schindler, Marivel Mendoza, Bethany Wells, and Blaine Merker

GUARDIAN PHOTO BY PAT MAZZERA



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## 7 places to BYOB

Remember that old college chant, "Beer before liquor, never been sicker. Liquor before beer; you're in the clear"? I propose we change that to: "Markups on liquor, never been sicker. Bring your own beer; you're in the clear."

Seriously, San Francisco is a city that likes its liquor with a side of food, and no one knows that more than restaurant owners — from the outright avaricious to those just trying to stay above their astronomical overhead in this real estate-deprived city. Haven't you been to a dinner where the bar tab doubles that of the food? And did you know that a martini usually costs the restaurant a tenth of what it charges you?

We've rarely been a city to sit by and tolerate injustice. But in this case, there's no need to go on a hunger strike about it: in fact, quite the opposite. Join the BYOB movement with a sit-in demonstration at any of these restaurants. (Interestingly, many are in the Tenderloin, which makes sense considering that the entire TL is pretty much a BYOB zone.) Refuse to pay ridiculous drink prices and sip the sweet nectar of freedom from bar tabs. It tastes kind of like Charles Shaw.

And remember: bring cash along with your booze. These places don't have liquor licenses — or credit card machines. But you can swing most of these places at around \$10 per person, so I trust you'll work it out. **(Ailene Sankur)**

### SHALIMAR

Shalimar is the Starbucks of the city's BYOB Indian places, boasting two locations within eight blocks of each other. I prefer the one on Jones Street. The ambiance is group-therapy-room-at-a-public-clinic:

wood laminate tables, green and white linoleum checked floor, institutional yellowed-cream walls. The service is fast, though never brusque. The food? Transcendent. The chicken tikka masala consists of plump balls of good-quality white meat chicken swimming in a delightful pool of clarified butter and masala. The garlic naan is heaven — doughy, buttery, and flavorful. Also delectable is the palak paneer — spinach and cheese sweetly spiced with cinnamon, cumin, cloves, and bay leaf. After dinner, cross the street to speakeasy-themed Bourbon and Branch for the ultimate lowbrow/highbrow evening.

**Pairing:** Try a sparkling wine — like Italian Prosecco or Spanish cava — with the dense multilayered spice of Shalimar's cuisine. Or bring along any of these Indian beers: Flying Horse Royal Lager Beer, Kingfisher, Himalayan Blue Lager, or Maharaja Lager. 532 Jones, SF. (415) 928-0333; 1409 Polk, SF. (415) 776-4642, www.shalimarsf.com

### TAJINE

The orange walls of Tajine denote a more cheerful atmosphere than Shalimar, but this Nob Hill gem is *tiny* ... er, cozy. I meant to say cozy. If you do BYOB here, make sure you keep it mellow — no flailing, weaving, or expansive hand gestures in this tight space. As for dinner, start with the chicken bastilla to share — phyllo dough stuffed with chicken and almonds and topped with cinnamon and powdered sugar. For less than \$10, the lamb or kofta kebab dinners come with zalook (eggplant, tomatoes, garlic, and parsley sautéed in olive oil), shalada (tomatoes, green onions, and parsley dressed in olive oil and lemon juice), and Moroccan bread. Or try the eponymous tajines — the



## TAJINE



name for both a Moroccan clay slow cooker *and* the stews made inside it — which have the same melt-in-your-mouth meat- and vegetable-infused flavor as your standard Crock-Pot dish. The chicken is cooked with lemon and olive; the lamb stewed with prunes and almonds. Tajine warns that if you BYOB, you must also buy a beverage from them.

*Pairing:* Morocco's native beer, Casablanca, is hard to find in the States, so opt for a

full-bodied, fruity New World pinot noir instead.

1338 Polk, SF. (415) 440-1718, [www.tajinerestaurant.com](http://www.tajinerestaurant.com)

### PAKWAN

I'll give Pakwan, the ridiculously inexpensive Indian and Pakistani favorite in the Mission, *this* over Shalimar: it has seating right outside. Which, on a sunny Mission day with a six-pack of beer from the liquor store across the street, has a

CONTINUES ON PAGE 18 »



Located in the heart of vibrant Hayes Valley, Breezy's Restaurant & Bar offers Mediterranean Tapas and a full Bar. Chef Rodney Boca has crafted a Mediterranean menu with influences from France, Spain and Italy.

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"A classy cut above most falafel joints, Hayes and Kebab offers an expansive variety of Greek and Mediterranean fare that goes beyond the requisite gyros and falafel to include salads, wraps, sandwiches, and authentic sides. The homemade Kurdish baklava is pretty spectacular, and the homemade chocolate cake is another terrific choice. Think of Hayes and Kebab as a reliable and affordable alternative to the more expensive stalwarts that populate this area near the opera, ballet, and symphony houses."

— AOL City Guide  
Editor Colleen Taylor



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## BYOB CONT.>>

certain allure. And ... sigh ... I must give Pakwan its due for having tandoori fish on the menu. (But Shalimar has brains! Brains masala!) Pakwan also does justice to Indian standards like saab gosht (lamb curry), bhengan bartha (eggplant), and aloo palak (spinach and potatoes). And its garlic naan gives Shalimar's a run for its money. But, I keep reminding myself, it's not a competition if both are supporting the common cause — cheap food and cheaper liquor.

**Pairing:** The recommendations for Shalimar will work here, but if you're going with the tandoori fish, try the citrusy notes of a muscadet. 3180 16th St., SF. (415)215-2440, [www.pakwanrestaurant.com](http://www.pakwanrestaurant.com)

### TAWAN'S THAI

Two reasons to take the bus to this Inner Richmond favorite: parking is notoriously sparse

and, two bottles of wine in, you probably shouldn't be driving anyway. Tawan's Thai is named after the owners' son, whose childhood drawings decorate its walls. On the front of the menu, Tawan (meaning little sun) warns that his mom's food is "the best, just be sure not to order it too hot unless you can handle it" — and he's right. Consider yourself warned. Start with the thung thong appetizer — chicken, potatoes, and spices fried in rice paper. Then share the tom yung gung soup, a spicy, sour chicken soup flavored with lemongrass and lime. The gaeng khiaw-warn — chicken, beef, or pork simmered in green curry and coconut milk with bamboo shoots, bell pepper, and basil — also is divine. And for you insane people who don't like spicy food, you can never go wrong with pad thai.

**Pairing:** An Alsatian wine, like a Gewürztraminer or Riesling, goes nicely with Thai food. A reliable alternative is a

Thai beer like Singha, Phuket Lager, or Chang Lager.

4403 Geary, SF. (415)751-5175

### CORDON BLEU VIETNAMESE RESTAURANT

Don't come to Cordon Bleu expecting its namesake cuisine. Don't come expecting French food at all. Instead, expect to gorge on this Vietnamese BBQ joint's highly touted five-spice chicken. Seven bucks will get you half a chicken (not half a breast or leg, *half a bird*) rubbed with spice and grilled until its blackened, spicy, crisp skin seals in the juicy, tender meat. That comes with "salad," a deep-fried imperial roll, and another delicious enigma — a meat sauce (ingredients unknown, but who cares when it's this freakin' good?) poured over rice. Suggestions: ask for extra meat sauce and lock your valuables in your trunk.

**Pairing:** Cordon Bleu's meat-centric delectability

needs beer; wine is just not going to cut through the greasy vittles. Try a regional beer such as Singha, Red Horse Dark or San Miguel Dark from the Philippines, or Singapore's Tiger Gold Medal Lager.

1574 California, SF. (415)673-5167. Not wheelchair accessible.

### DE AFGHANAN KEBAB HOUSE

The number one reason I could never be a vegetarian: kebabs, those seasoned, juicy, sizzling, glistening, dripping, perfect little skewered morsels of meat rotating hypnotically in restaurant windows, expelling wafts of their spicy, meaty aroma. (Try to wax that poetic about soysages.) If you too hold the kebab in high esteem, count on De Afghanan Kebab House to do it justice. There also are veggie options, like the borani badenjan (eggplant sautéed with tomato, garlic, peppers, and topped with yogurt) — or the borani kadoo (pumpkin sautéed with garlic,



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peppers, and also topped with yogurt). And De Afghanan Kebab has mantu, those steamed dumplings stuffed with beef and onions topped with (you guessed it) yogurt and a spicy tomato sauce. Yum.

**Pairing:** The Middle Eastern flavor of De Afghanan Kebab House would do well with the crisp fruitiness of a Sauvignon Blanc or the spiciness of a Zinfandel. An offbeat, oft-ignored, and underrated choice might also be a rosé; its brightness pairs well with yogurt-heavy items and grilled meats. 1303 Polk, SF. (415) 345-9947; 1160 University, Berk. (510) 549-3781; 37405 Fremont, Fremont. (510) 745-9599, [www.deafghanan.net](http://www.deafghanan.net)

## HAN IL KWAN

All I've heard about Korean food in the Richmond is, "You have to go to Brothers!" Well, here's why Outer Richmond's Han Il Kwan might make you want to break free of the siblings' sover-

eighty: food so authentic that San Francisco's Korean Tour Buses make a daily stop here; better ventilation, so you don't need a dry cleaner to get the funk of smoke and bulgogi out of your jacket; much easier parking than in the Inner Richmond; no wait for a table; *and*, for the win, you can bring your beverage of choice. It'll be hard to choose between the wonderful kalbi — marinated short ribs cooked at the table and served with rice, tofu soup, and banchan — and the equally killer bulgogi — tender BBQ beef cooked like the kalbi.

**Pairing:** Korean food and wine just don't mix. Maybe it's the acidity of the kimchi competing with the acidity of the wine; maybe it's just that the cold bite of a beer is the only thing that'll make your mouth stop burning. Either way, try the Korean beer, OB Lager, or another East Asian brew — like China's Tsingtao, Harbin Lager, or Macau Beer. 1802 Balboa, SF. (415) 752-4447 **SFBG**

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## 7 spicy suppers

It's true. Sometimes I can't help but crave the unforgettable feeling of burning my lips and tongue with my food. Some people call it masochism, but I can't help it. Eating real spice that makes my glands swell is heavenly — it's all I could ask for in a meal. Need a better reason? There's a saying that eating spicy food gives you a fiery personality. Follow that logic and fiery people make for spicy relationships. And what do you suppose comes from spicy relationships? I'll let you decide. Mmm, tasty. So what are you waiting for? Amp up your life and get your fire on at one of these gems. **(Candice Chan)**

### SPICES II

Fire fiends all over the Bay Area will tell you that one of the spiciest cuisines is Sichuanese, which is what Spices II in the Richmond District specializes in. They'll have your sweat glands working on overload with their mapo tofu, cumin lamb, and spicy Chinese bacon. Beware, though. Sichuanese dishes are made with a special tongue-numbing peppercorn. Don't be surprised if you leave a bit teary.

291 Sixth Ave., SF. (415) 752-8885

### MY TOFU HOUSE

If you're more in the mood for something hearty to fill you up, then move on from the flames of southern China and to My Tofu House's Korean delights, like its whip-ass kimchi, soon-dubu, or an order of kalbi. While it can be tough to get a table during peak hours, waiting guarantees a great meal that warms you from the inside out. The stewlike soft tofu soup is especially adept at combating those foggy, wet city nights.

4627 Geary, SF. (415) 750-1818

### INDIAN OVEN

Every fire-lover knows that a staple mascot for spiciness is curry, and there's no better

place to find it than at Indian Oven in Hayes Valley. Tikka masalas of all kinds will bowl you over with their exquisite balances of tongue-searing and flavorful. Also be sure to sample its tandoori and samosas. You can even bring friends with mild palates here; just make sure you specify the level of heat when you order.

237 Fillmore, SF. (415) 626-1628

### CHABAA THAI

Thai cuisine makes a strong showing in the ring of fire with Chabaa Thai in the Sunset District. Taking no prisoners, Chabaa's tom yum soup, pad see yu, or any of its curries leave lasting impressions. I admit this is one cuisine I was cowed by after asking for "as spicy as possible," and was soon brought close to tears as I feebly attempted to lift the chili oil-covered chopsticks to my lips. You win, Chabaa. You win.

2123 Irving, SF. (415) 753-3347

### EL CASTILLITO

Not in the mood for Eastern-influenced fare? Mosey over to El Castillito in the Castro, which boasts some murderously hot avocado salsa. Add its gigantic super burritos and mouth-wateringly good quesadillas to the other noteworthy tongue sensations of its many meat selections — the carne asada is a winner — and you'll be begging for more, even with a food-baby ready to be birthed as you walk out the door.

136 Church, SF. (415) 621-3428

### CAFÉ COLUCCI

If you're looking for a more hands-on approach to your spice adventures, Café Colucci offers a kick in the pants with its spicy green lentil soup; the chicken, shrimp, and lamb tibbs; and injera for some doughy goodness to balance out the flames. Ethiopian cuisine also gives you a chance to really





## CHABAA

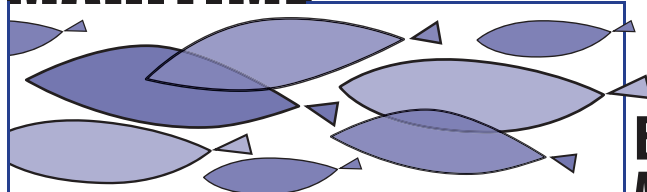
dig in, using your manos to scoop up the goodies. Vegetarians will find plenty to satisfy their cravings and given such huge portions, consider bringing friends.  
6427 Telegraph, Oakl.  
(510) 601-7999

### CHINA VILLAGE

East Bay residents rally around this fabulous addition to the Bay Area spice race. An ideal location for large dining parties, China Village excels at all

the typical provincial goodies that make hotheads ecstatic. Their water-boiled beef, appetizer beef tripe and flank (featuring the tongue-numbing peppercorns), and the West-style fish soup with "1,000" chillies will have you crossing the bridge again and again.  
1335 Solano, Albany.  
(510) 525-2285 **SFBG**

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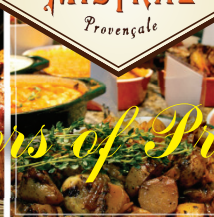
King Cha Cha is owned and operated by experienced chef Anthony Toi. This restaurant is his newest venture in the world of Thai cuisine. Here he takes Thai food to a new level, offering customers the highest quality of food and service.

General Restaurant Line:  
**415.391.8219**

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## CAFE FLORE



# 8 spots for outdoor dining

San Francisco and dining al fresco aren't necessarily allies. But they're not exactly enemies. We do have those gorgeous sunny spring days and plenty of places to enjoy them while we drink and dine. If you've been heartbroken over the closed kitchen at Zeitgeist, or if the rooftop deck at Medjool feels more like a frat party gone wrong than an afternoon social gathering, you can rest assured there are even places outside of the Mission that serve food and cocktails outside. So hop on your Yamaha, Bianchi, or Muni and check out some of these fabulous places to catch some sun with your buzz. Keep in mind these spots are best for brunch and lunch. And bring a

hoodie in case the sun subsides — San Francisco fog is about as forgiving as a hangover. **(Colleen McCaffrey)**

### PIER 23 CAFE

Check out views of the Bay Bridge and Coit Tower from this waterfront café with surfboard decor. Rain or shine, this dive gets packed with beer guzzlers and sunbathers. Enjoy buckets of Pacificos and top-shelf margaritas alongside pub grub like burgers, nachos, and the best fish tacos in town, until your vision's blurred and skin is blistered. Then enjoy the live music on warmer nights and heat lamps on cooler ones.

The Embarcadero, SF.  
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[www.pier23cafe.com](http://www.pier23cafe.com)

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## CAFÉ FLORE

The faint of heart need not attempt Café Flore — sharking a table here takes more nerve than buying booze underage. But there's a reason to steel one's resolve: this Castro hotspot, voted Best Café in our 2004 Readers' Poll, is ideal for any occasion, be it brunch, coffee, or an afternoon brew. With breakfast served daily until 3 p.m. and a full bar, there's no better spot for sun-drenched boozing and cruising.

2298 Market, SF. (415) 621-8579,  
[www.cafeflore.com](http://www.cafeflore.com)

## LA NOTE

The garden patio at La Note is worth the wait — and wait you will, because they don't take reservations for weekend brunch. Grab a java beforehand to stave off caffeine withdrawal as you watch other patrons enjoy their succulent crème fraîche pancakes. And don't worry, you'll get your turn. Complete with blue-and-white checkered tablecloths, this is

the perfect spot for brunch bliss or an afternoon assiette de charcuterie.

2377 Shattuck, Berk. (510) 843-1535, [www.lanoterestaurant.com](http://www.lanoterestaurant.com)

## PARK CHALET

If bike rides through Golden Gate Park leave you craving a wet one to quench your thirst, this spot — located behind the oceanfront Beach Chalet and just steps from Queen Wilhelmina's Windmill — offers the perfect spot to rest on your laurels and soak up some sun. Choose from an extensive list of beers from the onsite brewery, and when the fog rolls in, head inside to cozy up to the stone fireplace in the glass-ceilinged dining room. On weekends you can nurse a hangover and get a head start on your day's drinking with crab benedict and a Bloody Mary.

1000 Great Highway, SF. (415) 386-8439, [www.beachchalet.com](http://www.beachchalet.com)

## CAFÉ CLAUDE

Located in a secluded alley

between Union Square and the Financial District, Café Claude is a scrumptious substitute to the crowded Belden Lane. This quaint sidewalk café is reminiscent of Parisian bistros, and is therefore the perfect spot to nosh on a Niçoise salad and sip Sancerre. Plus there's jazz on weekends.

7 Claude, SF. (415) 392-3505,  
[www.cafeclaude.com](http://www.cafeclaude.com)

## EL RIO

For those days in deep summer when everywhere but the Mission District is covered in heavy fog, there's no reason to look farther than El Rio for a bit of sunny respite. Its multilevel back deck, barbecues, margaritas, and live salsa bands draw a mostly gay male crowd on Sundays, but you can get down with the ladies every fourth Saturday of the month, when the line to get in snakes down the block.

3158 Mission, SF. (415) 282-3325,  
[www.elriosf.com](http://www.elriosf.com)

## SAM'S ANCHOR CAFE

If the summer fog has taken even the Mission captive, escape to Sam's via the Tiburon ferry. From here, you can sip margaritas on the waterfront deck while viewing the cloud-engulfed city. Snack on fried calamari or head inside post-sunset for fine dining and seafood.

27 Main, Tiburon. (415) 435-4527,  
[www.samscafe.com](http://www.samscafe.com)

## PILSNER INN

The Pilsner doesn't serve food, but its state-of-the-art cooling system, which keeps draft beers chilled to 31 degrees, makes this Park Chow neighbor a Castro gem for gay and straight clientele. Expect to throw back a few on the garden patio with cleated patrons just back from the fields, because Pilsner Inn supports a handful of sports teams, including softball, soccer, bowling, and pool.

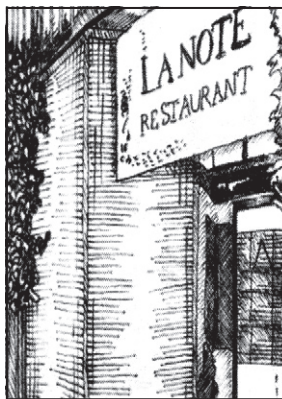
225 Church, SF. (415) 621-7058,  
[www.pilsnerinn.com](http://www.pilsnerinn.com) **SFBG**

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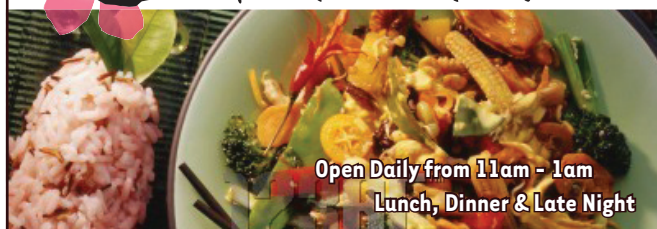
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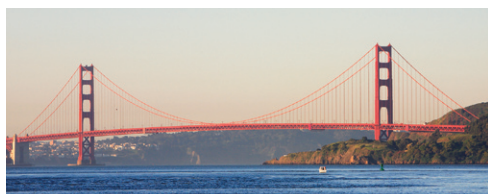
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## BISSAP BAOBAB



GUARDIAN PHOTO BY BRANDON JOSEPH BAKER

## 6 African feasts

If there's one thing I learned while traveling in Africa, it's that you can never predict the sublime. With little to guide you except your nose and your gut, eating "out" usually means perching on the side of the road in front of an unprepossessing stall and entrusting your appetite's fate to the dish of the day. Luckily it seems there's no end to the possibilities created from a handful of humble ingredients — tomatoes, onions, legumes, and yams — and the deft talents of a multitude of unsung culinary geniuses. Even luckier, in San Francisco, traveling gastronomically around an entire continent is as easy as hopping the bus to the next neighborhood, proving that even local travel can broaden one's horizons — not to mention waistline. **(Nicole Gluckstern)**

### TAJINE

Ever the sentimentalist, I have been known to wax nostalgic about Tajine's former gritty Jones Street location, which was so tiny it only had two or three tables and a bustling to-go trade among the city's taxi drivers. But because I consciously strive to embrace change (no, really!), I am able to appreciate their newer, bigger, and admittedly more expensive Polk Gulch location. Though its menu includes kebab plates, flaky bastilles (savory phyllo dough pastries), and an array of salads, it's the hearty, meaty, one-pot stews (*tajines*) that really get my tastebuds tingling.

1338 Polk, SF, (415) 440-1718,  
[www.tajinerestaurant.com](http://www.tajinerestaurant.com)

CONTINUES ON PAGE 26 »



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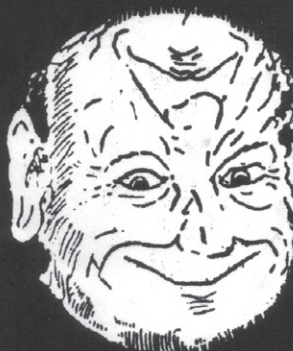
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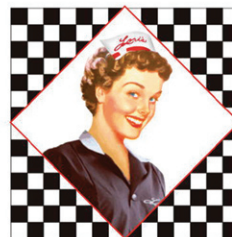
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## African CONT.,»

### BISSAP BAOBAB/ LITTLE BAOBAB

From the national dish of Senegal (thiebou djen, a tilapia-based stew, served with red rice) to the regional specialties of yapou khar (a melt-in-your-mouth lamb dish from the city of Thiès) and yassa chicken from Casamance, Bissap Baobab dishes up pan-Senegalese cuisine with friendly flair. The not-to-be missed drinks, mixed with *bissap* (hibiscus), ginger, and tamarind juices inspire smooth (and otherwise) moves on the dance floor of Little Baobab once the tables have been pushed away and the rotating lineup of DJs comes out to play at 10 p.m.

2323 Mission, SF. (415) 826-9287;  
3388 19th St., SF. (415) 643-3558,  
www.bissapbaobab.com

### AXUM CAFÉ

The axis of the San Francisco Ethiopian restaurant "scene" for many years, Axum Café serves a fine, spicy kifto (Ethiopia's version of steak tartare), tender lamb tibsie, and an array of vegetarian options that would make even a diehard carnivore's mouth water. Tucked behind an unpretentious facade on Haight Street, what Axum might lack in slickster glamour it more than makes up for with its solid menu and neighborhood-friendly prices. Plus, you can mistake their injera for a tablecloth — it's *that* big (though much tastier).

698 Haight, SF. (415) 252-7912,  
www.axumcafe.com

### A TASTE OF AFRICA

If you've come down, as I've been known to, with a persistent craving for *fufu* and *egusi* soup, you'll be relieved to know that your hankering can be satisfied at A Taste of Africa without having to jump on the next plane to West Africa. This cheerful Cameroonian establishment also serves steamed corn koki (call ahead for availability) and a variety of savory

vegetable dishes and meat stews. For an even more accurate taste of Africa, their food truck at the Ashby BART flea market definitely reminds me of the open air food stalls where I sampled so many of these dishes the first time around. 3015 Shattuck and Ashby BART station, Berk. (510) 981-1939

### NEW ERITREA RESTAURANT

Though the cuisines are virtually identical, you don't want to confuse Eritrea for Ethiopia in polite company. Still, for those who love their Ethiopian restaurant experiences, the drill at New Eritrea Restaurant will be familiar. Receive platters of flavorful food, plunge in sans silverware, and chase with copious amounts of Harar beer or steamed milk with honey. For the frugal and adventurous alike, they offer the familiar vegetarian sampler platter and a less usual meat one, plus three varieties of sambusas (stuffed East African fritters). 907 Irving, SF. (415) 691-1288

### TROPICAL PARADISE

I love eating out in Berkeley period. You never have to stand in hipster hell waiting for admittance to food heaven, even on weekends. And for my money, as far as heavenly goes, you can't beat the Ghanaian grub at Tropical Paradise. Try the tastiest fried plantains in the Bay, served piping hot alongside delicately seasoned black-eyed peas — a deceptively simple dish known as Red Red. The ubiquitous fermented corn dumplings (kenkey), hearty waachi, and a blood-warming "light" soup with fufu and generous portions of goat, chicken, or salmon bring Ghana to life in your mouth — especially when pleasantly washed down with a spicy sweet blend of fruit and ginger.

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